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unexpected honor overcomes the recipient to such an extent that she is seized with violent convulsions.

Noticing that the hour is growing late, the Bishop abruptly ends his talk. There follows a prayer, led by one of the deacons and chanted rather than spoken. At the end of each line the man's voice catches on a high sob verging on hysteria, and those in the congregation murmur an almost inaudible echo of the speaker's plea. The other deacons join in the recital and in the wild sobbing. At the conclusion of the prayer a high pitch of excitement is reached.

It is now time for the Bishop to take leave of his flock. Slowly, reverently, his attendants bring him his top coat and high Stetson hat. From his pocket "Daddy" draws out a large white handkerchief which he waves slowly in accompaniment to the closing hymn, a corrupt version of *Nearer My God To Thee*. The worshipers, too, wave their handkerchiefs in solemn tribute to their departing leader.

Shortly after a visit from the Bishop we pursued our course of research in Brownville. We found a number of people who had been named for week days or the month in which they had been born. Thursday Jones,* when questioned about this particular custom, replied, "Dey name me dat way jis cuz uh happen tuh be bawn on Tursday, I guess. Sech tings seem tuh be in our fambly. I hab an uncle whose name is Monday Collins. It seem tuh come duh fus ting tuh folks' mine tuh name duh babies fuh duh day dey is bawn on." [20]

Another man ** told us, "We hab membuhs in our fambly name Monday, Friday, July an Augus. Dey jis didn tink ub any name tuh call em but duh day dey wuz bawn.[20] Deah wuz two brudduhs call July an Augus an deah two sons wuz name aftuh um. Some uh deze names go all duh way back tuh slabery time. Duh chillun jis name aftuh duh kin."

* *Thursday Jones, Brownville.*
** *John Blackshear, 825 Grapevine Avenue.*

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759 uh people. Deah so much debilment in ole Uncle John
754 Bowen dat finally he eat out hesef till he fix hesef an die."

534 We asked about the use of drums.

[763] "Yes'm, dey alluz use tuh beat duh drum wen somebody
[764] die tuh let duh udduh folks know bout duh det. An at fewnuls too, dey beat it."

776 Relative to spirits, she replied, "No'm, I caahn see spirits cuz I ain bawn wid a caul. But now Bob Delegal he knows spirits. Down on Blackbeard Ilun, deah wuz a big hawg wut wuz a ebil spirit. Dey call um Blackbeard an dey try an try tuh kill um. So ole Bob Delegal cut up some silbuh an put it in he gun. He aim at duh hawg but he miss um an ole Bob Delegal fall down an couldn speak. Dey carry um home an he nebuh did talk no mo an duh nex day he die."

•782 According to Sophie the old people on St. Catherines would pray at the rising and at the setting of the sun and at the conclusion of their prayers they would say the words "Meena, Mina, Mo." Asked if she knew the meaning of these words, she shook her head negatively.

115 "Yuh know, Susie Branch, who lib jis cross duh road deah, could tell yuh some uh deze tings too. We wuz chillun tuhgedduh down on St. Catherines Ilun. I gwine call uh."

In a moment Susie * arrived. Tall and thin, she was dressed in a red, green, and blue cotton plaid skirt and a man's shirt with the tail hanging loosely outside. She was very talkative and was enthusiastic in verifying many of the things that Sophie had mentioned.

115 Susie listened gravely as we inquired about her recollec-
829 tions of the old people in her family. She told us the following story: "Dey steal muh great-great-gran, uh name wuz Sukey, frum off duh beach in Africa wen she wuz a young miss. I dunno wut paht ub Africa she come frum. She alluz say she come frum Africa, duh country weah dey dohn weah no cloze. At duh plantation at St. Catherines she wuz

* *Susie Branch, White Bluff.*

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WHITE BLUFF

789 "Muh gran say ole man Waldburg down on St. Catherine own some slabes wut wuzn climatize an he wuk um hahd an one day dey wuz hoein in duh fiel an duh dribuh come out an two ub um wuz unuh a tree in duh shade, an duh hoes wuz wukin by demsef. Duh dribuh say 'Wut dis?' an dey say, 'Kum buba yali kum buba tambe, Kum kunka yali kum kunka tambe,' quick like. Den dey rise off duh groun an fly away. Nobody ebuh see um no mo. Some say dey fly back tuh Africa. Muh gran see dat wid he own eye."

556 He had heard that on Blackbeard Island it was customary
• 782 in the old days for a group of men to agree upon a location in which to bury their money, whereupon one of them would voluntarily offer his life and be put to death at the hands of the others, thereby enabling his spirit to stand guard and protect the treasure.

785 "I seen a spirit muhsef once wen I wuz a young man," Prince continued. "It wuz late in duh aftuhnoon. I wuz
786 cookin crab an uh look up an see a man widout a head. I
787 look away, den uh look back tuh weah uh see im, an sho nuff deah he is in plain sight. I rush tuh duh house an staht tuh tell muh fostuh mudduh but she stop me. She dohn wahn me tuh talk bout it. Den duh nex day she ax me wut uh see an fix me sumpm tuh drink an I nebuh did see no mo spirit."

754 Another woman in the community, Bessie Royal,* in re-
[115] lation to her belief in witchcraft and conjure said, "Lots uh people roun yuh say dat hags ride um at night.[69] None ub um ebuh bodduhed me. Dey say dat duh hags is libe folks wut hab duh powuh tuh change demsefs intuh animals an insecs an any udduh ting dey want tuh be.[68]

"I dohn know how it wuz done but muh faduh wuz cunjuhed [15] by a suttn uhmun dat wuz said to be a hag.[69] He go crazy sometimes an ack lak he wuz sked by sumpm chasin im. He git wus and dey take im tuh a root doctuh. Duh root
[755] doctuh say he wuz cunjuhed. He hab us ketch a wite chicken

* *Bessie Royal, White Bluff.*

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SANDFLY

791 In a section of Sandfly known as Baker's Crossing lives Ophelia Baker, better known as Madam Truth, professed fortune teller and clairvoyant. The woman's sober attire and her modern attractive house give little evidence of her profession. When holding a seance, however, her whole appearance undergoes a change; her body becomes tense and jerks spasmodically; her dark eyes roll wildly. Of her ability in her chosen field the medium says, "I advise on business an love affeahs. I tell good an bad nooz comin tuh yuh. Deah's a remedy fuh ebry trouble an I hab dat remedy, fuh a spirit hab brung it tuh me."[22a,e]

791 Madam Truth, a member of the Holy Sanctified Church
794 of Sandfly, said that all members must undergo a sanctify-
783 ing process in order to be saved. After this has been accomplished members claim to be able to hear, from a great distance, singing, talking, and the sounding of drums. We
[533] were told that the beating of the drums has a special significance, but that was all we could learn on the subject; we were told that this was a secret, divulged only to members.

794 Members of the church are forbidden to eat certain kinds
262 of fish and also cabbage, lettuce, and other green vegetables. The reason they give is that they have received a warning from the spirits that it is unwise to eat these foods.[65]

791 The plump, dark-skinned fortune teller said that she had
533 spent her childhood on Skidaway Island. She remembered
202 hearing the drums beaten to tell the people in the nearby settlements of an approaching dance or festival. Her father had been one of those who beat the drum and thumped out a regular message on it, a message that could be heard for miles and was clearly understood by all those who had heard it.[26]

764 The woman also remembered wakes which had been held on Skidaway. Coffee and sandwiches were served the[37b,e]
[782] mourners, each one of whom poured some of the coffee on the ground for the spirit of the deceased.[59b,e]

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of large round baskets, about twenty inches in diameter, with matching covers that fitted well down over the rim. Isaac used bulrushes and grasses for his material and worked with a sure deft touch that insured sturdy construction.

He remembered that drums had been used for a variety of purposes during his youth. He said, "I use tuh dance tuh duh drum.[35] I recall wen dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people on Harris Neck tuhgedduh fuh a dance aw fewnul.[36] Cose, dey hab a diffunt beat wen dey call um tuh a settin-up aw fewnul frum duh one dey use tuh call um tuh a dance. Deah wuz two kine uh drum. One dey call duh kittle drum, an one wuz duh bass drum. It stan bout two an a half foot high. Dey use tuh alluz hab a settin-up wen somebody die. Wen folks would go tuh duh settin-up, dey would gib um bread an coffee.[37b.]

"Dey still hole ribbuh baptisms yuh. Dey git tuh duh ribbuh an attuh dey pray an sing up on duh bank, duh preachuh take duh candidates down in duh ribbuh. Fo he baptize each ub um, he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh an ax fuh all duh sins tuh be wash away."[63]

Remembering what we had been told about the haunted road to Maringo, we questioned Isaac and he said, "Yes'm, I hab heah bout duh hanted road tuh Maringo on duh Young Man Road. Lots uh folks say deah is spirits roun deah.[59] Wen yuh try tuh pass duh fawk in duh road, duh spirits stop yuh sometime an wohn let yuh by. Some uh duh spirits mus be good, fuh Ise heahd one story bout a man who wuz passin by an all ub a sudden his hawse jis stop shawt in his tracks. Jis wouldn go anudduh step. Duh man try an try, but he couldn make duh hawse moob. Den he see a spirit come long an it take hole ub duh hawse bridle an lead him long. Duh hawse go right long. Den duh spirit disappeah. I hab heahd lots uh stories bout dat road but uh nebuh see nuttn muhsef."

Our next interview was an unusually delightful one. Sit-

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789 juh on em too. They's made of haiah, an nails,[10] an grave-
754 yahd dut,[9] sometimes from pieces of cloth an string. They tie em all up in a lill bag. Some of em weahs it roun the wrist, some of em weahs it roun the neck,[11b] an some weahs a dime on the ankle. Then ef somebody put down cunjuh fuh em it tun black an[12a, c, d] they git anothuh one tuh wawd off the evil.[6] Some of em has a frizzled chicken in the yahd. People do say they kin dig up cunjuh an keep it frum wukin gense yuh.[13a]

754 "Yuh heah all the time bout folks wut is cunjuhed. They gits crippled up an ef they dohn do nuthin bout it, some of em dies.[7]" [15]

795 We asked if river baptisms were still held in the section
796 and Liza answered, "Yes'm, they hole the baptisms right down yonduh in the rivuh. They always hole em on the ebb
[783] tide; that's so the sins be washed away. All the pruhcession mahch down tuh the rivuh. The preachuh leads the way. Fus the preachuh stan on the bank an pray. Then he take
• [782] the candidates one by one an dip em in the watuh. Then he
[783] make a prayuh fuh the rivuh tuh wash away the sins.[63] I call that prayuh 'the matrinal.' "

Liza was unable to explain just what this term meant, but she said it was always applied to the prayer to the river.
764 She told us, too, that "settin-ups" were held for those who died and that the mourners sat up all night with the body
[533] and sang and prayed. "In the ole days they always use tuh beat the drum at the funeral an they still does it tuhday. As they take the body tuh the graveyahd, they beat the drum as they move long.[24] They put the body in the grave. Then they mahch roun an sing an beat the drum."

759 We had been told that several midwives rendered services to those residing in the section. We asked Liza about this
and she told us, "Anna Johnson, she's my sistuh. She's a midwife an she tends tuh lots of folks roun heah. Those
[755] midwifes sho knows wut tuh do.[48] They use a shahp knife

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early days, but her memory was rather clouded. She answered pleasantly, however, and when she was not talking to us mumbled softly to herself.

"I do know dat folks bawn wid a caul kin see spirits," [4] she admitted. "Plenty uh folks roun yuh say duh spirits peah tuh um." [59]

When we inquired about drums being beaten at funerals, she shook her head stubbornly and refused to say anything on the subject.

The daughter, overhearing the conversation, paused in her task of ironing, and said, "Yes'm. Dasso. They beats the drum tuhday at the fewnul.[34] Specially ef yuh blongs tuh a awganization, they goes right along in the fewnul pruhcession an beats the drum as they mahch. I remembuh heahin bout in the ole days they beat out messages on the drum.[26] Let the folks know wen sumpm wuz bout tuh happen. Wen they give a dance ovuh on St. Catherine, they beat the drum tuh let the folks heah know bout it."

At a funeral, the bottles and dishes and other possessions belonging to the departed person were left on the grave, the women informed us. "The spirit need these," [47] the younger woman explained, "jis lak wen they's live. Evrybody mahch roun the grave in a succle an shout an pray."

We inquired if some people in the section were afraid to eat certain foods. Once more Josephine shook her head in negation.

The obliging daughter who listened intently to everything that was said again interceded. "I do heah bout that. Theah is some folks wut caahn eat suttn foods. They say it's bad luck an they nevuh do eat it. Right now theah's lots of foods wut some folks dohn eat." [65]

At this point in the conversation the older woman brightened and told us about the harvest festivals held during plantation days.

"We hab big feas. Ebrybody bring some ub duh fus

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764 tings, den duh udduhs in duh fambly will die too. Dey will
[761] folluh right long. Folks alluz hab two fewnuls. We hab one wen dey die an den once a yeah we hab a suhvice fuh ebrybody wut died durin duh yeah.[43] Duh preachuh say a prayuh fuhrum all."

795 From this source we obtained added verification of the fact that river baptisms were still held.

[783] "We alluz baptize on duh ebb tide," said Rosa. "Duh
[782] watuh washes duh sin away. Duh preachuh pray up on duh bank an den wen he baptize duh candidate, he pray tuh duh ribbuh tuh take away duh sins."[63]

527 Later in the conversation the women recalled harvest festivals[33] that had been held many years before. "Dat wuz alluz a big time." Anna's rather somber face lit up at the remembrance of the festive occasion. "Ebrybody bring some ub duh fus crop tuh duh chuch an we prepeahs a big
[782] feas. We pray an gib tanks fuh duh crop an pray fuh duh
[535] nex yeah. We all eat an sing an dance. One uh duh dances call duh Buzzud Lope.[17] We still dance dat tuhday."

115 Rosa told us proudly that she was a granddaughter of
[554] Katherine Basden who had been recognized as a leader among the Negroes in the section.

"Me an muh brudduh wuz muh granmudduh's favorites," she said. "She alluz said she lak us bettuhn all duh udduh chillun. Wen I wuz only bout twelve yeahs ole, she tell me wen I grow up I would take huh place an carry on duh wuk she wuz doin."

[533] Moving her powerful shoulders in rhythm and clapping her hands together, the woman sang us a song that her grandmother had crooned to new-born babies as she held them in her arms. The words were, for the most part, indistinguishable. Over and over we caught one repeated phrase, "nikki yimi, nikki yimi."

[763] "Muh granmudduh wuz took very sick. She knew she wuz gonuh die. Dat wuz jis wen muh oldes chile wuz bawn.

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she declared. "I buns it so nobody kin wuk hahm wid it." [10]

Young Reuben spoke up. "Ef yuh weahs a silvuh coin, it brings yuh good luck," he stated doggedly. "An ef any body cunjuh yuh aw wuk gense yuh, duh money tun black an yuh know yuh hab tuh do sumpm bout it fo duh cunjuh wuks." [12a, c, d]

"Did you ever see anyone who was conjured?" we asked. All three nodded solemnly.

Uncle Ben spoke first. "Dey's mosly all crippled up an caahn moob bout. Ef dey dohn do nuttn, duh cunjuh gits wus an dey dies." [15]

"Folks wut is cunjuhed hab snakes in em an sometimes frawgs.[5] Yuh kin see em moobin roun in deah bodies," volunteered Reuben. "Wen dey visit duh root doctuh [48] an he wuks obuh em, den dey's jis as good as noo."

"Some folks roun bout say dey sees spirits," added Uncle Ben. "Dey calls em plat-eye, cuz dey hab jis one big eye hangin out in front.[62] I dohn fool roun wid sech tings fuh dey's sho bad luck."

"In some places the people told us that dead people's spirits returned to earth. Is that true here?" we asked.

Aunt Sarah speculated. She wagged her black-bonneted head until her brass earrings jangled. Finally she offered, "I dohn guess yuh be bodduh much by duh spirits ef yuh gib em a good fewnul [36] an put duh tings wut belong tuh em on top uh duh grave." [47]

Uncle Ben helped with this explanation. "Yuh puts all duh tings wut dey use las, lak duh dishes an duh medicine bottle. Duh spirits need deze same as duh man. Den duh spirit res an dohn wanduh bout."

Aunt Sarah said that they went to set-ups and that in the old days, after the mourners had arrived, a chicken was killed.[35, 37b, e] Neither Aunt Sarah nor Uncle Ben, however, knew the reason for this.

Catching sight of a few crudely made farm implements

dey put salt on duh stomach tuh keep it frum purgin. Ebrybody put duh hands on um tuh say good-bye.[31]

"On duh way tuh duh grabe dey beat duh drum as dey is mahchin long.[34] Wen duh body is put in duh grabe, ebrybody shout roun duh grabe in a succle, singin an prayin. Each one trow a hanful uh dut in duh grabe." [36]

The conversation shifted to topics of a more cheerful nature and Rachel told us that in former years at harvest time, they had been in the habit of holding "crop suppuhs." [35]

Her face creased itself into a delightful grin and her eyes shone as she told us, "Dat sho wuz a big time. We hab a big feas. All night we shouts an in duh mawnin right at sunrise we pray an bow low tuh duh sun. Muh great-gran—she name Peggy—I membuh she pray ebry day, at sunrise, at noon, an at sunset. She kneel down wen she pray an at duh en she bow low tree times, facin duh sun."

Alec's thoughts in the meantime had turned to more trivial affairs. He went on to tell us about the various dances that are popular at the present-day social affairs.

"Cose we do duh Buzzud Lope," [17] he began. "Ebrybody knows dat. Den we alluz does anudduh dance. We calls it 'Come Down tuh duh Myuh.' We dance roun an shake duh han an fiddle duh foot. One ub us kneel down in duh middle uh duh succle. Den we all call out an rise an shout roun, an we all fling duh foot agen."

In answer to our question about river baptisms the old people informed us that they are still held in the section. Alec described these. "We all sing an pray an duh preachuh pray tuh duh Lord. Cose duh candidate caahn be save less he reely want tuh be. Duh preachuh an duh candidates goes down in duh watuh. Den duh preachuh make a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh an duh ribbuh washes duh sin away." [63]

It is bad luck to eat certain types of food, Rachel told us. This belief had never influenced Rachel or Alec but they

POSSUM POINT

231 hollowed-out log set on legs served as a watering trough for the ox.

764 Susan told us about the death of her mother, Rachel La Conte, who had come from Liberty County. "She die right [533] in dis house. Dey measure uh wid a string. Dey beat duh drum tuh tell ebrybody bout duh settin-up.[26] We all set [202] up wid duh body. We hab a big wash pot full uh coffee an hab a big sack uh soda crackuh fuh duh folks.[27b, c] Ebrybody place dey han bery light on uh eahs an on uh nose an den dey say, 'Dohn call me. I ain ready fuh tuh go yit.'[30, 31]

"We bury uh by tawch light attuh dahk. Ebrybody [782] mahch roun duh grabe in a succle. Ebry night attuh duh [795] fewnul I put food on duh poach fuh duh spirit tuh come git it.[56, 58]

533 "In duh ole days dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people
534 tuh duh fewnul.[24] Dey beat it slow—boom—boom—boom.
Wen dey wannuh stubrup duh folks fuh a dance aw frolic,
202 dey beats duh drum fas. Den dey knows it ain fuh no fewnul an dat it's fuh a good time. Duh people neahby, wen dey heahs it, beats deah drum an das how dey sends a message so udduh folks gits it.[26]

534 "I kin membuh two kine uh drum. Deah wuz duh lill kittle drum. Hit wuz bout fifteen inches cross an tree an a half foot high. Dat wuz duh drum dey beat fuh a settin-up."

795 Susan, too, gave us a description of the river baptisms. "Dey baptize in duh watuh down at duh landin. All duh [797] candidates is dressed in wite. Dey all confess deah sins an [783] say dey want tuh be save.

"We all mahch long in a line an sing an pray. When we
795 git tuh duh ribbuh bank, we stop an duh preachuh say a long
796 prayuh tuh duh Lawd. Den duh preachuh take duh candi-
[782] dates one by one and dey go down in duh ribbuh. Duh
[783] preachuh he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh. Dey alluz bap-

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795 796 783 (553) 231 754 tize on duh ebb tide cuz duh ribbuh is spose tuh wash duh sins away.[63] All duh folks sing a song called *All Muh Sins Done Wash Away.*"

There were several white chickens wandering about the yard and Susan told us that her principal reason for keeping them was that they possessed the power to dig up conjure.[13]

829 We asked the old woman if she had ever known any Africans, and she said, "I know one man. He name Primus O'Neal. He come frum Africa an he talk funny talk. He call a pot a 'jam.' I membuh he say, 'Lemme cook sumpm fuh nyam.' He mean sumpm fuh tuh eat."

115 It later developed that this same Primus O'Neal was the grandfather of Rosa Grant • whom we found living in a small gray cottage on the Townsend Road. Rosa was sixty-five years old, with copper-colored skin and rather aquiline features.

115 829 We asked about her grandfather and she told us some of the things of which she had heard him speak.

"He tell me dey nebuh hab tuh plant in Africa. Dey gadduh wile okra an palmettuh cabbage fuh food frum duh forres. He tell bout a wine call 'figlin watuh' dat dey drink in Africa. But he nebuh say jis how dey make it.

115 •782 829 "Muh gran come frum Africa too. Huh name wuz Ryna. I membuh wen I wuz a chile seein muh gran Ryna pray. Ebry mawnin at sun-up she kneel on duh flo in uh ruhm an bow obuh an tech uh head tuh duh flo tree time. Den she say a prayuh. I dohn membuh jis wut she say, but one wud she say use tuh make us chillun laugh. I membuh it wuz 'ashamnegad.' Wen she finish prayin she say 'Ameen, ameen, ameen.'

829 "She talk plenty bout cunjuh.[15] Say dat wen a pusson bin made tuh swell up frum a ebil spell, dey got tuh hab somebody tuh pray an drag fuhrum. Ef yuh hab a pain aw

• *Rosa Grant, Townsend Road, Possum Point.*

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longs tuh Huger Barrett an Ise one uh duh bes fiel hans on Picayune Plantation."

We interrupted the old woman's reminiscences about plantation days to question her about funeral customs.

"We didn alluz hab too much time fuh big fewnul in dem days cuz deah wuz wuk tuh be done an ef yuh ain do yuh wuk, yuh git whipped. Lots uh time dey jis dig a hole in duh groun an put duh body in it, but wenebuh we kin, we hab a settin-up."

We asked Aunty Jane if they used to provide plenty of food for the mourners.

"Yes'm, dey sho did hab regluh feastes in dem days, but tuhday, at mos settin-ups, yuh dohn git nuttn but coffee an bread.[37a, e] Den dey would cook a regluh meal an dey would kill a chicken in front uh duh doe, wring he neck an cook um fuh duh feas.[35e] Den wen we all finish, we take wut victuals lef an put it in a dish by duh chimley an das fuh duh sperrit tuh hab a las good meal.[56] We cubbuh up duh dish an deah's many a time Ise heah dat sperrit lif um. We ain preach duh suhmon wen we bury um but we waits a wile so's all duh relations kin come."

"Is it bad luck to steal from a grave?" we wanted to know.

"Bad luck?" repeated Aunty Jane. "Sho it bad luck. Dem dishes an bottles wut put on duh grabe is fuh duh sperrit an it ain fuh nobody tuh tech um.[64] Das fuh duh sperrit tuh feel at home.[47] Wen he die fah off, we bring um home tuh bury um, dohn leh no strainjuh be bury wid um. Yuh gib people wut ain belong tuh yuh anudduh piece uh groun tuh be bury in.[3] We alluz hab two fewnul fuh duh pusson. We hab duh regluh fewnul wen yuh die. Den once a yeah we hab one big preachin fuh ebrybody wut die dat yeah."[43]

Aunty Jane looked up slyly when we asked her if she believed in conjure.

"I ain belieb in um muhsef but deah's plenty wut do. Ise had Ellen Hammond libin wid me. She die las yeah. She sho

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during an ebb tide and Lawrence hastened to assure us, "Yes'm, dey alluz hole duh baptism on a high ebb tide. Das so duh tide will carry duh sin out." [83]

Had the old man ever known any people who had been named for the days of the week?

"I knowd one man name Fridy, one dat wuz name Satdy an anudduh he name wuz Toosdy. Guess dey name um dataway cuz dey wuz bawn on doze days." [30]

Baker told us that many people in the section refused to eat certain foods, believing bad luck would follow if they ate them.

"Deah's lots dataway now," he commented. "Lots uh folks dohn eat some food cuz ef dey did dey say it would bring bad luck on duh parents. Some dohn eat rice, some dohn eat egg, an some dohn eat chicken." [65]

"Muh gran, she Rachel Grant, she use tuh tell me bout lot uh deze tings. I membuh she use tuh pray ebry day at sunrise, at middle day and den at sunset. She alluz face duh sun an wen she finish prayin she alluz bow tuh duh sun. She tell me bout duh slabes wut could fly too. Ef dey didn lak it on duh plantation, dey jis take wing an fly right back tuh Africa.

"Muh gran say dey use tuh eat wid oystuh shells. Use um fuh spoons. Wen dey go tuh shoot duh gun, dey ketch duh fyuh wid a rag an flint."

We asked him if he had ever heard of a hoe that worked by itself and he told us that he had often heard this story regarding the hoe [39] and that he had also heard many tales about a magic rail splitting wood without anyone touching it.

Suddenly the quiet of the afternoon was shattered by a high reed-like whistling sound. It continued for quite a time, then stopped as abruptly as it had started. Was it a person or an animal? It was impossible for us to tell.

"Das a spiduh, missus," Baker explained. "It come roun

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764 "Yes'm, we hab set-ups wid duh dead, but I ain know bout killin chicken. At duh fewnul, dey kills hawg an hab[40] plenty tuh eat.[87b, c] Duh reason fuh dis is so dat sperrit hab plenty at duh las. Wen fewnul pruhcession gits tuh grabe-yahd, dey stops. I ain know wy dey do it but dey stops at duh gate, and dey ax leab tuh come in. Deah ain nobody at duh gate, but dey alluz ax jis duh same. Dey say, 'Fambly, we come tuh put our brudduh away in mudduh dus. Please leh us go tru gate.' "[60]

754 About conjure, however, the old woman was not very communicative. "I ain know bout cunjuh," she said. "I heahs bout spells on people, but I ain see um. Now shadduhs, I see um. One night comin down duh road, I git tuh place weah road tun, an I heah sumpm behine me runnin long close tuh groun. He got big long tus, dis long, an he tongue hangin out. He pas close tuh me, an he look a me. I see um good. He got long tick haiah lak Noofounlan. Deah ain nebuh bin dog lak um on ilun. He mus be shadduh.[54]

"Den one night, I come frum chuch wid huzbun. We gits tuh tun, I heahs sumpm agen. I looks, an deah is sumpm look lak man. Huzbun he ain see um. Den I heahs a stompin, an sumpm come by so close tuh me I kin mos tech um, an he tun tuh spotted ox. 'Budge,' I calls um wen dey changes lak dat. Dat spotted ox go gallopin off, an I say tuh huzbun, 'Yuh ain see um?' He say, 'Wut?' I say, 'Da spotted ox wut go pas down duh road an out in da fiel?' He say, 'I ain see nuttn.' Das wen I luns dat wen yuh see um, yuh musn talk bout um.

539 "No'm, I dunno no animal stories. I heah um, but I fuh-gits. I know bout lizzud an rabbit, dough. Yuh ain know bout lizzud an rabbit? Well, lizzud, he wuk hahd. He hab sode wut he cut crop wid, an it wuk by itsef an it cut so fine, nuttn lef.[39] Lizzud he speak wuds tuh it—it do all duh wuk. Now, rabbit, he smaht. He ain got no sode lak lizzud got an he wahn one. He hide behine bush, an he watch da sode

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539 wuk fuh lizzud, an he wahn it bad. One day wen lizzud not at home, rabbit, he sneak up, an he steal lizzud sode. He laf tuh hesef cuz he got da sode. He take da sode tuh he fiel an he staht it tuh wuk. He tink he know duh wuds dat lizzud say tuh sode, an he call, 'Go-ee-tell.' Sode staht wukin. Pretty soon, sode finish duh crop, an rabbit wahn um tuh stop. Sode comin too close tuh noo wintuh crop wut rabbit got tuh hab fuh lib on. So rabbit he yell, 'Go-ee-tell' in loud voice, and sode he wuk all duh fastuh. He cut down ebryting rabbit hab an ain leab nuttn. Lizzud who bin hidin in bush, he laf an he laf tuh he sef at rabbit, cuz rabbit tink hesef so smaht wen he steal sode an now he ain got nuttn tuh eat all wintuh. Rabbit he see lizzud, an he call, 'Stop dis sode.' Lizzud he say, 'It my sode.' Rabbit he say, 'Dasso. It yuh sode, but stop it. It cut down ebryting uh got.' Lizzud say, 'Sode wuk fastuh ebry time he heah 'Go-ee-tell.'" Den lizzud he staht laffin an he calls out loud, 'Go-ee-pom,' an sode stop. Lizzud den go out an pick up sode an tak um home."

829 Knowing that Katie was a descendant of Belali, we asked her if she knew anything of him. She nodded and answered, "Belali Mohomet? Yes'm, I knows bout Belali. He wife Phoebe. He hab plenty daughtuhs, Magret, Bentoo, Chaalut, Medina, Yaruba, Fatima, an Hestuh.

829 "Magret an uh daughtuh Cotto use tuh say dat Belali an
•782 he wife Phoebe pray on duh bead. Dey wuz bery puhticluh bout duh time dey pray an dey bery regluh bout duh hour. Wen duh sun come up, wen it straight obuh head an wen it set, das duh time dey pray. Dey bow tuh duh sun an hab lill mat tuh kneel on. Duh beads is on a long string. Belali he pull bead an he say, 'Belambi, Hakabara, Mahamadu.' Phoebe she say, 'Ameen, Ameen.'

829 "Magret she say Phoebe he wife, but maybe he hab mone one wife. I spects das bery possible. He come obuh wid all he daughtuhs grown. He whole fambly wuz mos grown up.

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115 the current belief concerning the necessity of asking leave to enter the graveyard.

313 764 782 [795] "Grant Johnson, he wannuh cut some wood an he git obuh duh fence uh duh cimiterry," he explained to us. "He didn ax leab uh nobody." He wuz a cuttin duh wood down as fas as he could wen all ub a sudden he see a big black dog wut [54] come attuh im. Dat wuz a shadduh an he ain lose no time in jumpin obuh duh fence.

764 782 795 "Wen yuh hab a fewnul eben today, yuh hab tuh ax leab tuh entuh duh cimiterry gate. Duh spirit ain gonuh let yuh in lessn yuh ask leab ub it."

115 We visited Nero Jones,* an elderly Negro who lived on his sixty-five-acre tract of land with a daughter, Henrietta. Sitting beneath the protecting shade of an arbor which overlooked a peanut field, the old man was busily engaged in shucking a large basket of the nuts.

527 535 [534] He, too, remembered having seen harvest dances. "We use tuh hab big time at hahves," [23] he began. "We pray an sing duh night tru. Wen duh sun riz we go out an dance. We hab big beatin uh drums an sometimes we dry duh goads an leab duh seed in um. Dey make good rattle.[22, 25]

829 782 "I membuh Uncle Calina an An Hannah well. Dey mighty ole an dey bun up in duh house. Day talk lot uh funny talk tuh each udduh an dey is mighty puhticuluh bout prayin. Dey pray on duh bead. Duh ole man he say 'Ameela' and An Hannah she say 'Hakabara.' "

361 [136] Later we drove slowly over the flat grass-land to Hog Hammock, another Negro community at the south end of Sapelo. The red-legged herons winging their way against the vivid blue of the sky, the dense foliage rimming the edges of the inland marshes, clumps of feathery bush, all contributed to the tropical beauty of the island.

115 At Hog Hammock we visited Shad Hall (Plate XVII),** A A

* *Nero Jones, Sapelo Island.*
** *Shad Hall, Sapelo Island.*

A, [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-V--Analyst]

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another Belali Mohomet descendant, who came to the door of his neat cottage clad in blue denim. Delighted to have visitors, Shad was eager for conversation. With a few polite words of thanks for the pipe tobacco, he began to talk of the old days.

"Muh gran wuz Hestuh, Belali's daughtuh. She tell me Belali wuz coal black, wid duh small feechuhs we hab, an he wuz bery tall. She say Belali an all he fambly come on same boat frum Africa. Belali hab plenty daughtuhs, Medina, Yaruba, Fatima, Bentoo, Hestuh, Magret, and Chaalut.

"Ole Belali Smith wuz muh uncle. His son wuz George Smith's gran. He wuz muh gran Hestuh's son an muh mudduh Sally's brudduh. Hestuh an all ub um sho pray on duh bead. Dey weah duh string uh beads on duh wais. Sometime duh string on duh neck. Dey pray at sun-up and face duh sun on duh knees an bow tuh it tree times, kneelin on a lill mat."

We asked Shad if he had ever heard his grandmother say anything about Africa. Had she ever mentioned what sort of house they lived in or what food was generally eaten? Shad nodded eagerly, and from the steady flow of talk that followed it was evident that he had heard much of the land of his ancestors.

"Muh gran Hestuh say she kin membuh duh house she lib in in Africa. She say it wuz cubbuh wid palmettuh an grass fuh roof, an duh walls wuz made uh mud. Dey make duh walls by takin up hanfuls uh mud an puttin it on sumpm firm, sticks put crossways so. I membuh some pots and cups dat she hab made uh clay. She brung deze frum Africa. She membuh wut dey eat in Africa too. Dey eat yam an shuguh cane an peanut an bananas. Dey eat okra too. Yes'm, das right, dey calls it gumbo. Dey dohn hab tuh wuk hahd wid plantin deah. Jis go in woods an dig, an git big yam. Dey eat udduh roots too. Dey ain no flo tuh

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754 "Yuh ain heah so much bout cunjuh on dis ilun, but deah's a few wut does a mighty lot uh talkin. Nellie Dixon, she lib right obuh deah in dem trees, she alluz talkin bout roots. She say somebody go tru duh yahd an drap a root fuhrum. She tote a sack roun uh neck tuh gahd um." [8, 12a, c, d]

115 When asked to whom he had belonged during slavery he
567 answered, "Muh fus massuh Montally. He ole massuh. Young massuh wuz Massuh Tom Spalding. Den I belongs tuh Mike Spalding; dat befo freedom. Sometime duh ole folks call duh missus 'maduba' an duh massuh 'mahaba.' Yes'm I bin big man wen freedom come."

527 Shad remembered that during his childhood he had often witnessed harvest festivals and dances.

"Hahves time dey hab big time. It come once a yeah an dey pray an dey sing all night long till duh fus cock crow. Den dey staht tuh dance an tuh bow tuh duh sun as it riz in duh sky. Dey dance roun in a succle an sing an shout. Sho is a big time.[38]

764 "Wen yuh hab a buryin, yuh alluz hab tuh ask leab tuh
782 duh grabeyahd. Dey do dat tuh dis day. Yuh say, 'Fambly, please let us lay yuh brudduh in mudduh dus.' " [60]

764 The story which Cuffy Wilson had already told us about
313 Grant Johnson's having been chased from the graveyard by
782 a shadow was also verified from this source. Shad told us,
715 "Grant Johnson he go deah one time tuh cut wood widout askin leab. He busy cuttin wood wen all ub a sudden he see big black dog comin tuh um wid one paw raise an red eye an big grinnin teet.[54] Grant he ain lose no time in gittin way. Dat dog wuz shadduh wut come attuh um.

829 "Duh ole folks use tuh tell dat story bout duh hoe wut
789 could wuk by itsef. It stan right up in duh fiel widout nobody holdin tuh it.[39] Das ef yuh knowd how tuh wuk it. Doze Africans knowd how tuh make dat hoe wuk an dey knowd how tuh wuk roots.

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115 could really be so old. We asked him who his people were and what he remembered about the old times.

(567) "We belong tuh duh Coupers. Ise son tuh Belali. He wuz butluh tuh James Couper at Altama. I membuh we hab lots uh time tuh play wen we's chilluns." He smiled pleasantly at the memory.

829 This man, too, remembered native Africans he had known, for he told us, "I membuh lots uh Africans, but all ub em ain tame. But I knowd some ub em wut is tame an I knowd one tame Indian."

We asked again about old Alexander, the African root maker.

829 "Yes'm, I membuh him. He wuz a lill black man an he
567 belong tuh duh Butlers but I ain know him well cuz we's diffunt people. Now ole man Okra an ole man Gibson an ole Israel, dey's African an dey belong tuh James Couper an das how I knows em. Dey tell us how dey lib in Africa. Dey laks tuh talk. It funny talk an it ain so easy tuh unnuhstan but yuh gits use tuh it. Dey say dey buil deah own camp deah an lib in it.

"Ole man Okra he say he wahn a place lak he hab in Africa so he buil im a hut. I membuh it well. It wuz bout twelve by foeteen feet an it hab dut flo an he buil duh side lak basket weave wid clay plastuh on it. It hab a flat roof wut he make frum bush an palmettuh an it hab one doe an no winduhs. But Massuh make im pull it down. He say he ain wahn no African hut on he place.

829 "Ole Israel he pray a lot wid a book he hab wut he hide, an
• 782 he take a lill mat an he say he prayuhs on it. He pray wen
567 duh sun go up an wen duh sun go down. Dey ain none but ole Israel wut pray on a mat. He hab he own mat. Now ole man Israel he hab shahp feechuh an a long pointed beahd, an he wuz bery tall. He alluz tie he head up in a wite clawt an seem he keep a lot uh clawt on han, fuh I membuh, yuh could see em hangin roun duh stable dryin."

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Asked if he remembered any other Africans who tied their heads up, the old man told us, "I membuh a ole uhmun name Daphne. He didn tie he head up lak ole man Israel. He weah loose wite veil on he head. He wuz shahp-feechuh too an light uh complexion. He weah one ring in he eah fuh he eyes.[27] I hab refrence to it bein some kine uh pruhtection tuh he eyes. Wen he pray, he bow two aw tree times in duh middle uh duh prayuh."

We asked about the music they used to have and what they used for dancing in the old days.

"We ain dance den duh way dey dances now. We dance roun in a succle an den we dances fuh prayin.[19a] I membuhs we use tuh hab drums fuh music an we beat duh drum fuh dances.[23]

"Now, ole man Dembo he use tuh beat duh drum tuh duh fewnul,[24] but Mr. Couper he stop dat. He say he dohn wahn drums beatin roun duh dead. But I watch em hab a fewnul. I gits behine duh bush an hide an watch an see wut dey does. Dey go in a long pruhcession tuh duh buryin groun an dey beat duh drums long duh way an dey submit duh body tuh duh groun. Den dey dance roun in a ring an dey motion wid duh hans.[18] Dey sing duh body tuh duh grabe an den dey let it down an den dey succle roun in duh dance.

"Dey ain hab no chuch in doze days an wen dey wannuh pray, dey git behine duh house aw hide someweah an make a great prayuh. Dey ain suppose tuh call on duh Lawd; dey hadduh call on duh massuh an ef dey ain do dat, dey git nine an tutty.

"Dey ain marry den duh way dey do now. Attuh slabery dey hadduh remarry. Dey hab big baptizin in duh ribbuh lak dey do tuhday an dey dip em on duh ebb tuh wash duh sins away an duh preachuh he make a great prayuh tuh duh ribbuh.[63]

"Ole man Okra he a great un fuh buil drum.[25] He take a calf skin an tan it an make duh side uh maple. Ise pretty

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wen she go tuh eat an she alluz eat out of a wooden bowl. Sometimes she use a spoon, but mos of the time she jis eat with uh finguhs. Muh granfathuh use tuh set with uh an talk. They talk a lot an speak the African wuds an souns. I ain know wut they talk bout, mosly bout the times in Africa I think. One soun aw wud I membuh they say wuz 'cupla' but wut it mean I sho dohn know.

"Fuh the longes time I have a wooden bowl [70] bout lak the one Nanny Mammy have. It wuz holluhed out jis as smooth, an it wuz made of some kine uh dahk wood. Not long ago muh wife say she ain see da bowl in monuh yeah. She think mebbe one uh the chillun, muh grans I mean, mustuh misplace it someway.

"Theah's a lot uh things I membuh at the plantation. Muh grandmothuh, Sally, she make the bes rice cakes. She make em with brown shuguh. She ain mix em up with honey. I seed em make home-made drums theah too. They stretch a sheep-hide ovuh a roun bucket.[35] Then they beats the drum in the fewnul cession wen they mahches tuh the buryin groun.[34] Long then wen a pusson die they have a settin-up [37a] an have a suppuh too.[37b, c] Theah wuz an still is pussons wut put a dish uh food out on the poach fuh the spirit, but some of em take cooked food tuh the grave an leave it theah fuh the spirit.[58] They say, too, that a frizzle chicken kin dig up any kine uh cunjuh.[15] Theah's a lot uh talk bout cunjuh these days mung the young folks, even mo than in the ole days." [15]

A short while later, our interview concluded, we thanked the old man for the information and took our leave. Looking back we saw him sitting on the steps of his house, his gray head bent, to all appearances lost in a reverie of the past.

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[For the texts of prayers, see Category 539.]

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3

The Texts

539

The Prayers

My knee ben down on cold cold floor!

•782
537

The prayers are the most creative and expressive form of Sea Island oratory. Like the tales, they are composed and delivered within a set tradition, but the success of the delivery is dependent not only on what the speaker says but also on the eloquence and rhetorical skill with which he says it. To the Sea Island congregation, outstanding rhetorical skills are attributes to be praised, practiced, and deeply venerated as essential characteristics of learned people. The learned people, however, are frequently those without much academic background. Without a doubt, many of the best expositors of the prayer tradition have little, if any, formal education. Their prayers, nevertheless, are composed in a tradition of impassioned eloquence. They embody Ciceronian, Quintilianesque, and other ornaments of style capable of creating belief, inspiring, and passionately persuading a congregation to respond with raucous and joyous replies.[1]

Both men and women, but only those known to be carriers of the prayer-giving tradition, pray at specified times during the church service. The member called on will kneel and pray publicly without pausing, stuttering, or searching for words for as long as twenty-five minutes, depending on the occasion for the prayer. The ability to pray is considered a "gift" like the ability to sing or play the piano. Those gifted with the technique are singled out when they are very young and encouraged to practice speaking in the church at special feasts, weddings, or holidays, especially Easter and Christmas. As children they learn only to speak the words; as adults they know how to speak them with the compassion that comes only from experience. Others may

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782 IV. Appeals

A. Father, we down here this evening
Heavenly Father
Asking for your mercy

B. We want you to come in this building
One more time

C. We ask you to please strengthen us
Where we are weak
And build us where we are tearing down

D. We ask you to look at the leaders
From one to another, Jesus
Make them ushers of sound judgment
Then truly devoted to God

E. I want you to bless each and every usher
Jesus
Help them to please hold out and hold on

F. Look at Reverend Pinckney one more time

G. Look at the mistress of ceremonies
Jesus

H. Want you to look at Jerusalem one more time

I. [Look at] me too

V. Peroration

Somewhere, Lord, Job declare
The wicked must cease in trouble
And my soul have rest
'Tis thy servant's prayer, Master!

782 195 [193] The social setting in which a prayer of this sort is delivered contributes to the development of bilingual skills for many Gullah speakers. This prayer, like most others, contains few features characteristic of contemporary Gullah speech, such as the use of the preverbal markers *de*, *ben*, *bina*, and *don* and the omission of inflectional markers. There is a good reason for the absence of these and other features in this text. [537] A prayer of this type is composed in a tradition of rhetorical

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115 ground: dog fennel, sea muckle, and mullein, all of which can be
759 dried, boiled, and made into teas to alleviate ailments like colds, stuffy noses, headaches, and nervous conditions. In addition, he pointed out several varieties of the more potent underground roots: white root, known to relieve headaches and cold symptoms; black root, said to be good for nerves and the shakes; snakeroot, excellent for constipation; and the revered bloodroot, said actually to bleed when it is cut and generally accepted even by the younger generations as a cure for such blood disorders as anemia and high and low blood pressures and for various female problems. I was privileged to be offered samples of some of his many medicinal cures, for example, snakeroot boiled and steeped for four months in good whiskey. Though this concoction is bitter and among the worst-tasting of all the herbal cures, it is fairly common on Sea Island shelves. Some say, "If the taste ain't de move whatever de pain you, the whiskey sho will." Mr. Hampy believed that
• [782] when one took something from nature, like a root, one had to return something back to it. Thus for every root he dug up he left a few cents in the hole, more or less depending on the type of root; only silver money, for example, was left for the bloodroot.

159 Mr. Hampy's oral style was typical of most Sea Island religious
538 oratory, though, since he was accustomed to public address on Sundays as well as storytelling, his language varied according to the occasion. In telling his religious tales, he would engage his audience's attention with the seriousness of his subject and the dignity of his manner. Unlike Mr. Henry, he seldom stood. He would begin very slowly, explaining that his subject matter could always be substantiated by the Bible (though in some cases, as it turns out, it could not be). In the midst of his sermon or tale, he would often do as Miss Deeley did: stop, look around at each of the listeners' faces, and say, "I ain't believe you know what I ben talk about, do you?" Not expecting a reply, he would continue. The question was to gauge the extent to which he held his audience's attention. Whether he had everyone's attention or not, he, like Mr. Henry, would proceed to talk until I ran out of tape, until it was too dark, or until the mosquitoes became too bad to continue to sit outside.

159 During one of my recent trips to the Sea Islands, in the summer of
761 1984, Mr. Hampy died. His doctors said that there was no medical reason why he should have died. According to the islanders, Miss Maime, his wife, had been battling cancer for more than ten years and

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acquire the ability to join in the words of prayer, but only those who have the gift can move the congregation to shout out a response.

None of the prayers are written, and herein lies much of their inventiveness. Many rival T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland* in elaborate allusions to works of literature. The most effective ones are alive with imagery, maxims, puns, understatements, and cultural references which the audience understands and responds to enthusiastically. More important, the prayers are filled with devices used judiciously throughout to induce the rhythmic incantation that is imperative to the Sea Island prayer tradition. Alliteration, transplacement, interplacement, epanaphora (repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of successive clauses), and other features create pleasing recurrent sounds which stir, stimulate, and evoke verbal responses from the audience. Epanaphoric passages—for example, "I want to be the child of God! / and I want my sins forgiven / I want my spirit meek and mild / and I want to go to Heaven when I die"—add to the beauty of the prayers and also demonstrate the speaker's skill as a rhetorician. The echoes of words and phrases in the audience's responses attest to the community's respect and admiration for skillful and creative use of language:

> Master, it's no lower *No! No lower!*
> Could I come this evening
> Excepting my knees are down at the floor *Floor! Cold floor!*
> Guilty heart within
> Crying guilty and already condemned *Condemned!*

Alliteration is used, as in "coax and call," "cold, cold hearts," and "Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove," to help establish the rhythm, as well as to contribute to the enthusiastic and energetic tone of the entire delivery.

The strong rhythm and chanted delivery of the prayers accords with the prayer traditions of many African and African-derived cultures, including those of West Africa, the West Indies, and South America. The rhythmic chants are crucial to the developmental flow of the prayers.[2] Once the rhythm is established, it is maintained through various means, most important of which is the reply from the listeners. Some truly impressive prayer givers excite an audience to maximal response through their energetic diction and explosive tone alone. Others may intensify the rhythmic effect by drumming with a chair, tapping a cane against the floor, or just swaying back and forth in time to some inaudible sound.[3]

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It has been suggested that some respondents in African-American congregations may not understand or actually accept what the speaker says but respond instead to the highly contagious cadence established by the call from the speaker and response from the audience.[4] This observation may be justified in part: one may not be stimulated to respond to the message in the prayer, but it is difficult if not impossible to ignore the rhythm with which the prayer is delivered. Without a doubt, however, some congregants listen carefully to every detail—not only to receive the message but because, seeing that the prayers are not written, potential prayer givers must be attentive in order to learn the art of the prayer tradition.

Perpetuating this tradition is made easier by the formulaic element in their arrangement. They usually begin with a quotation from the Bible, a poem, or, more traditionally, some lines from the Lord's Prayer. The speaker usually has no prior knowledge that he will be asked to pray. Thus, the quotation gives him time to organize his thoughts and prepare himself to deliver an effective prayer. He is at liberty to alter a quotation to his own specification and often the alteration is more effective than the original. For example, the lines "For thine is the kingdom / The power and the glory" may be improved to "O Lord, that thine may be our kingdom / We expecting your kingdom to be / [a] poor sinner['s] glory!"

After the quotation, the speaker begins his personal prayer, a structured oration with a proem, line of appeal, and peroration. The proem opens with a rhetorical salutation to God commensurate with the solemnity of the occasion. It permits the speaker to express his humility as a servant of God, using such words as *mutable* and *impermanent*. The speaker does not presume to be as fortunate as the "foxes of the forest" or "the birds of the air." He projects himself as a mere waif asking for mercy with his knees bent in supplication:

Master Jesus, hear me
Another one of you[r] servant
Bow this evening, Jesus

Sin anguished and bended

. . . . . .

Crying to you this evening, Jesus
For Mercy

While mercy can reach [us]

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As you say the foxes of the forest
Got hole

And then the birds of the air has nest
Master, we are poor son of man

Nowhere to lay down weary head

The rhythm and tone are usually set in the speaker's salutation to God, after which the speaker begins his appeal. This plea is in the form of an itemized list. The number of requests will depend on the occasion and the number of items concerning which the speaker is asking for consideration. If he makes an appeal for himself, he usually includes it as the very last item in his list. Each appeal will often begin with a traditional expression, such as "Then, then, my God! We ask . . ." or "O! You, you this evening, my heavenly Father, we ask . . ." The pleas are likewise concluded with a traditional expression, like "Have Mercy if thou on us so please!" In addition to clarifying the organization of the prayers, these phrases, perhaps more than others, help to sustain the increasing force and rhythm.

The peroration may vary. Most prayers, however, end with the quotation "Somewhere Lord, Job declare / The weak shall cease in trouble and the soul find rest."

The Sea Islanders have prayers for every occasion. They may range from a one-minute request for assistance in the completion of a hard day of labor to a twenty-five-minute eulogy for a lost loved one. The first prayer quoted below was delivered for the 1980 Usher's Anniversary at New Jerusalem AME Church on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina, and is typical of most Sea Island prayers for special occasions. In this case there was a scheduled prayer giver, but the person who actually spoke did so without notice when the scheduled speaker proved unavailable.[5] A brief outline of the prayer is included to demonstrate the smoothness and cohesiveness with which the parts develop into the whole:

I. Formal opening

II. The Lord's Prayer

III. Proem: speaker's personal prayer of humility

Master Jesus, hear me
Another one of you[r] servant

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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782 195 [532] [533] eloquence and skill. Thus the speech is expected to be elevated and elaborate while retaining certain syntactic and phonological features characteristic of the community language. Many prayers are composed of hymns, Scriptures, spirituals, and traditional expressions, reflecting both biblical concepts and the black experience. Accordingly, the vocabulary, syntax, and phrasing do not necessarily represent those of the person praying, but may be words and phrasing he has heard and stored in his memory over the years. Again, the learned prayer givers are most often those "gifted" in the art, with little formal training. The important factors are that the person have a good memory, be able to join beautifully constructed phrases together spontaneously, and be able to establish a chanting rhythm which can be easily sustained by the reply from the audience. While the text alone is intelligible on paper, most of the beauty of the prayer escapes, along with the force of the audience's reply and the increasing fervor of the speaker's call.

782 537

539 [782] Opening Prayer for the Usher's Anniversary

Mr. James Brown
New Jerusalem AME Church
Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina
13 July 1980

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come, O Lord
Let thy holy and righteous
will be done on this earth
As you will was already done in heaven
Give us, Lord, this day
As our daily bread
You forgive those who have sin
And trespass against us *Amen*
Lead us not into sin, neither temptation
But, please deliver us from evil *Yes!*

O Lord, that thine may be our kingdom
We expecting your kingdom to be
[A] poor sinner['s] glory *Oh yeah!*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

539 And then, Lord *Then Lord!*

I will go home and get
My just resolve[21] *Oh yeah!*

For all that I have done *Done!*

And then, Lord *My Lord*

Want you to meet me, Jesus
Somewhere, Lord, Job declare *Oh yeah!*

The wicked must cease in trouble *Trouble!*

And my soul have rest[22] *Rest*

'Tis thy servant's prayer, Master!

Amen. *Amen! Amen! Yeah! Yeah sir! All right!*

115 126 Mr. Mike Simmons was well into his nineties when Miss Myma introduced me to him and his wife (he has since died). He sat in the doorway of his two-room shanty and tolerated a seven-day linguistic procedure. I collected a phoneme inventory from him by asking him to pronounce nearly three hundred words. The task is slow and exacting; sometimes his wife, in her late eighties, would call out from the kitchen and offer a variant way in which a word could be pronounced. This was a lovely couple.

[533] [782] When Mr. Mike tired of the procedure, he would look out over the grassy field in front of his home and begin to hum an old-time song, or he would begin to pray. When he did either of these things, it was my cue that he was tired and I should leave. The following is one of his short prayers.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

The Lord's Prayer

539
•[782] Most Revered Mr. Mike Simmons
Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina
July 1976

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come
Thy will be done on earth as was done in heaven.
Give us this day, O daily bread
And forgive those who art in trespass against thee
O heavenly Father!
We are meeting on worldly soil today
Calling on your name
And, heavenly Father, couldn't do nothing until you come
Come now, Jesus, if you please?
The revered thanks to you today, heavenly Father
O Lord, if you please!
Look upon me in the eyes of pity
In the heart of compassion
I be so please, heavenly Father
O Lord, from last August, the single
They told us at least
O heavenly Father, you know when fall down, get up
Ben calling on your name
And I couldn't do nothing until de come!
Come now, heavenly Father, please, if you please

Amen!

115 782 533 Tom Mack is an active member of the Wadmalaw church community. He is a professional singer and is considered well on his way to perfecting the prayer-giving tradition. Though he is in his early forties, he is, according to the islanders, still experiencing the "scalding water" of life, one of the primary ingredients in learning to chant the words of the prayers with emotion. When he heard that I was writing a book, he came by to see me and offered the following prayer for me to complete.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

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Prayer for Patricia Jones-Jackson

Thomas Mack, Sr.
Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina
July 1980

God, the sun is almost down
And the evening shall appear
O may we all remember well
The night of death draw near
We lay our garment by
Upon our bed to rest
But soon death will soon rob of all
Of what we here possess
At this evening
Thy heavenly Father
Hear me a moment
A creature bowed

This evening, Jesus
I ask you this evening
My heavenly Father *Yes Lord!*
Remember Wadmalaw once more time
This evening, Jesus *Yes Lord!*
Remember our community
This evening, Jesus
Remember Jerusalem
This evening, Jesus
We need you
This evening, Jesus
We are down here
In the lonesome valley
This evening
And we cannot do nothing
Until you come
Come, Holy Spirit
heavenly Dove
With all thy quiverling power
Kindle the flame

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Chapter 3

1. The prayers are often presented in a chanting style difficult for non-Gullah speakers to understand. Thus I gratefully acknowledge the aid of Mrs. Ida Morris-Hamilton of Wadmalaw Island for helping with transcriptions and translations.

2. See Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy;* Harold Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1976); William H. Pipes, *Say Amen Brother* (New York: William Federal Press, 1951); and Jones-Jackson, "Oral Tradition."

3. The prayers are normally accompanied by music. If no musical accompanist is available, the prayer giver and the congregation create their own musical accompaniment with handclaps, shuffles, and moans.

4. See Carter, *Prayer Tradition;* Pipes, *Say Amen Brother;* and Molefe Asante, *African and African-American Communication Continuities* (New York: Council of International Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975).

5. This prayer was delivered impromptu by Mr. James Brown, who is known for his ability to deliver stirring words with absolutely no prior preparation. I am grateful to him and Rev. Renty Pinckney for permitting me to record this prayer during church services. I am likewise grateful to Rev. Chester R. Jones for his comments on my analysis of the prayer. I owe special thanks to Rev. Alfred Owens of Greater Mt. Calvary Holy Church, Washington, D.C., for his invaluable assistance in providing references for the many biblical allusions in the prayer. All references are to the King James Version.

6. Ps. 51, David's cry for repentance and mercy, may have been a model for this passage.

7. Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58.

8. Rom. 6:12, 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:53–54; John 15:1.

9. Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5.

10. John 1:32.

11. Phil. 3:13.

12. Ps. 1:14.

13. John 12:2, 25:4.

14. 2 Cor. 7:5.

15. The speaker adapts his prayer to fit the occasion by including the purpose for which he is offering his prayer in strategic places. Many of the following passages are based on the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes; the speaker brings them into his prayer as responses (e.g., "Want my spirit meek and mild").

16. The minister is often considered the assembler and leader of the community as well as of the church. Thus, like Moses, he is viewed as a deliverer of the people, one chosen by God to be the inheritor of the silver trumpet. See Num. 10:1–10.

17. This is a rural expression of the idea from Matt. 7:24–29 that whosoever builds his house on solid rock shall not be moved by the storms of life.

18. Jerusalem is not only the holy biblical city but, literally, the name of the AME church in which this prayer was delivered.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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000 19. 1 Cor. 15:53–54.

•782 20. "Ain't gonna study war no more" is a reference from an old Negro spiritual. The concept itself comes from several references to war in the Bible, such as Ps. 46:0, Isa. 2:4, and Mic. 4:3.

000 21. Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 16–27.

22. Job 3:17.

128 23. I am again indebted to Mrs. Ida Morris-Hamilton, who assisted in transcribing this sermon from a recording made during the church service.

538 24. For further discussion of the call-and-response technique see Grace Sims Holt, 113 "Stylin' outta the Black Pulpit," in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out*, ed. Thomas Kochman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 189–204.

538 25. The Gullah and African tales given in this chapter are classified according to 128 the scheme set out by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson in *The Types of the Folktale* [113] (Helsinki: *Suomalainen Tiedeakatenia*, 1961). Motifs and the names and numbers assigned to tale types are from Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–58).

In the search for systematic methods of presenting such paralinguistic features as voice quality and nonverbal expressive phenomena, Ray L. Birdwhistell proposed a system of notation for describing certain sound phenomena, for example, an arrow pointing upward or downward to indicate various pitch ranges. He likewise developed an elaborate notational system for analyzing body motions and gestures, a system that distinguished hip, leg, ankle, shoulder, wrist, arm, and other movements (see Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context*). Some of these notations are quite complex, and they are not yet widely used. Here, because the language of the narratives is complex in itself for most English-speaking readers, I decided to eliminate reading handicaps by minimizing foreign symbols that would tend to interrupt the natural flow of the tales.

538 26. For example, Richard Dorson has a variant of this tale in *American Negro Folktales*, p. 114.

000 27. This observation was brought to my attention by Charles Joyner, who is a native of the South Carolina coastal area.

113 28. See Harris, *Nights with Uncle Remus;* Parsons, *Folklore of the Sea Islands;* Finnegan, *Limba Stories;* Florence M. Cronise and Henry Ward, *Cunnie Rabbit, Mr. Spider and the Other Beef* (Chicago: Afro-Am Press, 1969); and Dorson, *African Folklore*.

000 29. The precautionary measures taken here do not assure that the Igbo tales collected were not influenced by other cultures. No culture can be totally without outside influence; I tried only to decrease the likelihood of obtaining tales with non-African origins. Accordingly, I collected the tales from children and adults only in their native tongue. Although English is a second language in Nigeria, those in remote areas have little reason to use it. I also did not ask to hear any particular type of tale, nor put any restrictions on the length or number of tales told by any one person. I asked simply to hear some of their stories.

30. I am indebted to the renowned Igbo writer Obi Egbuna for his observations concerning African folktales and their implications in Igbo society. Any misrepresentations that might remain are, of course, my own.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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CHAPTER 8

Elements of the Head and the Heart: Gullah Interpretations of Christianity

539
•782 Do not pass we by, My Jesus, as you go on de road from Jericho to de new Jerusalem, but tarry at de door and speak de word of hope to we heart and blow de breeze of blessing upon us. Almighty and eternal Father, we de prisoners of Hope, turn to de stronghold and begs oona (you) fur give we de long look and de over-coming patience dat we could have 'couragement fur go forward and see de truth dat will make us free. Do God, if it so please you, Massa Jesus, Gib me de long look like Moses, so I could see into de Promised Land from de mount, if my weary feet ain't neber guine to walk in de New Jerusalem with my people. . . .*

"Let me lib wid de musket in one hand an' de Bible in de oder,—dat if I die at de muzzel ob de musket, die in de water, die on de land. I may know I hab de bressed Jesus in my hand, an' hab no fear."
"I hab lef' my wife in de land o' bondage; my little ones dey say eb'ry night, whar is my fader? But when I die, when de bressed mornin' rises, when I shall stan' in de glory, wid one foot on de water an' one foot on de land, den, O Lord, I shall see my wife and' my little chil'en once more."**

793 Sam Polite lived to become senior elder on the Benjamin Fripp plantation. Polite did not know his age, but had "ben a man fore 'gun shoot'" (Battle of Port Royal, November 1861), and became the most respected and sagacious elder on St. Helena Island. Those who knew and observed

*Prayer of Sam Polite, "The Long Look," n.d., misc. corr., Penn School Papers, SHC.
**Gullah soldier's prayer, in Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 48.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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spirit world while the traveling spirit would torment the living. Hence, Gullahs asserted that the last used articles were buried with the deceased to "keep de speerit outen de house." This would go along with the Gullah practice of thoroughly cleaning the deceased's house to break earthly ties. Another explanation which the Gullahs offered was "to satisfy de speerit at de grave." It was said that the spirit desired to be near objects that it loved before death. "Yessuh," stated one informant, "dey puts t'ings on de grave so dey be handy fur de speerit and he be satisfy."[20]

Like Africans, Gullahs had a definite revulsion against the return of the deceased in the form of "trabblin' speerits" regardless of the kind of life the individual had lived. These spirits were considered evil, similar to *kindoki* among the BaKongo. Every effort was made to pacify these "speerits." This is further illustrated by the presence of whiskey bottles on the graves in churchyards. A Gullah minister provided the following explanation:

> When a man is living it take liquid whiskey in he stomach to make him drunk, but when a man is dead he don't hab a stomach to hol' de liquor, but it don't take nuttin' but de fumes from whiskey to make a speerit drunk. Dose dat bin used to gittin' drunk fo' dey dies, dey will keep on gittin' drunk after dey dies, so dey t'ink dat de speerit ob a drunkard will hover right in front ob de mout' ob a livin' person when he bin drinkin' so he can whiff de fumes ob de whiskey on he bre't an' dat will make de speerit drunk. But ain't no livin' man want no speerit hover right dere in front ob he mount', so dat is why dey puts whiskey bottles on de drunkard's grave. De whiskey bottles on de graves is empty 'cause de smell is enough to satisfy de speerit an' make 'en drunk.[21]

Gold Coast Africans believed that the spirits made use of all offerings left by friends and relatives after death. Mende carried to the graveside cooked chicken together with rice and red palm oil. This mixture was placed on a banana leaf and laid by the side of the grave. Sometimes soil was dug out and the red rice placed in a hole. Then a little water was placed on the grave and words were spoken: "Here is water, wash your hands, eat your rice, drink your water." The family then ate the remainder of the chicken and rice and offered a prayer, indicating that the family had done right by the deceased and expected the dead to remain there and to protect them:

> We are leaving you as we have finished your last ceremony. We want you, from now on, to look after your children (other members of the family may be mentioned). May no bad thing fall on them.[22]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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Similarity of beliefs and motives regarding grave adornment is best illustrated by the types of articles found on graves in the Sea Islands. Such objects as partially filled medicine bottles, mirrors, broken pitchers, saucers and cups, mayonnaise jars, pickle jars, vaseline, cold cream, tobacco, and black pepper were placed on graves. Seashells were also commonly placed on graves. Other personal items included shaving brushes, toothbrushes, mirrors, combs, and belt buckles. In addition, twelve Gullah ministers reported to Samuel Lawton that other articles of food such as grapes, oranges, apples, bananas, bread, and cake were often placed on graves and soon eaten by animals and birds. Further efforts to satisfy the spirits of the dead consisted of pouring water on the grave during a drought. This custom could have been for the purpose of quenching the thirst of the spirit so that the dead would not disturb the living by seeking water.[23]

(782) (775)

Gullah decoration of graves indicates a firm belief in the return of ancestors from the world of the dead. Offerings on graves were statements of homage and in these graveyards, one finds the strongest expressions of African-inspired memories. Many objects are associated with or used to hold water. In BaKongo religion, deceased ancestors became white creatures called *bakulu*. They lived in the village of the dead, referred to as the land of all things white. This village was located under river beds and lakes. *Bakulu's* white spiritual transparency allowed them to return to the world of the living undetected. Sea shells, used on Gullah graves, for instance, are an important theme in BaKongo metaphysics. One BaKongo prayer which addresses the shells states, "As strong as your house, you shall keep my life for me. When you leave for the sea, take me along, that I may live forever." The essence of this prayer is recaptured by the late Bessie Jones of St. Simons Island, Georgia. She related:

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> The shells stand for the sea. The sea brought us, the sea shall take us back. So the shells upon our graves stand for water, the means of glory and the land of demise.[24]

Just as sea shells and pottery express immortal existence, and the significance of a water underworld, so the glittering, iridescent mirrors and porcelain on Gullah graves reflect the light which represents the spirit. These objects, like water when struck by sunlight, are intimations of the flash of the separated spirit in symbolized flight. Mirrors, lamps, porcelain, and glass are spirit-embodying once they are placed on the graves.

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3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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in the slave quarters, this did not imply total acceptance of a Judeo-Christian concept of reality. The Gullahs broadened the meaning of Christianity, organizing and integrating it into past beliefs and practices. Two traditions formed the basis of the Gullahs' struggle against slavery. The example of Christ allowed them to take a superior attitude toward their oppressors. But they also exerted spiritual and psychological autonomy by clinging to Africanity. In their isolation, the Gullahs remained an uprooted people whose acceptance of Christianity was sometimes outward, selective, and subject to reinterpretations which would not force them to relinquish old ways entirely. Of course, African beliefs, where these remained, accommodated the slave situation just as Christianity, to some extent, accommodated African religion and philosophy. Where Protestantism did not tolerate Africanity as a separate expression, Africanisms sometimes continued through secretiveness or by finding a place at the center of Protestantism as practiced by the slaves.

As Lawrence Levine notes, freedom placed the slaves in a culturally marginal situation, and weakened their "cultural self-containment." No longer were values and cultural standards determined from within the group. African-Americans found themselves in a bicultural situation, absorbing elements of the dominant society in order to obtain recognition and privileges. Perhaps at the moment of freedom the period of accommodation began as a significant factor in black life. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the organization of the black church. This point may be most easily illustrated by the motif of the gospel songs and their otherworldly context, whereas the slave spirituals were full of camouflaged prayers for freedom. As Levine points out, the period after bondage reflects a changing consciousness.[3] Slave religion bred radicalism in the early years, and progressivism later. The institutionalized black church, formed after freedom, was far more powerful and independent, but often counseled conservatism.

Sam Polite lived long past bondage. He was over one hundred years old when he prayed the prayer of "The Long Look." He had grown up in slavery, lived through emancipation, reconstruction, restoration, and into the twentieth century of segregation. Still he prayed the prayer of hope. Still he asked for a sign—a look at the future for his people. Polite's prayer implied what history has revealed—that the "New Jerusalem" evaded the African-Americans after freedom. The emancipation experience, born of hope and optimism, brought a new kind of bondage.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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APPENDIX D

The Deity

776 [533] The Gullahs' concept of the deity was not that of a God of wrath, but one of love and mercy. In Gullah music, phrases such as "Kind Jesus," or "In the mornin' when I rise, tell my Jesus Huddy ho," indicate that for these slaves Christ was a warm personal friend, as well as a fellow sufferer. Similarly, the Gullahs' prayers also express how they viewed their relationship with God. Prayer was considered actual communication with Jesus, and He was expected to listen and hopefully answer the appeal in some way or another. In such verbal expressions the supplicator reveals inner ideas of the deity. In a study done among the Gullahs in the 1930s, it was observed that by far the most prominent attribute of the deity in prayers was merciful, being mentioned 189 times as opposed to a total of 119 times for all the other attributes ranging from loving to glorious. No description suggesting wrath or vengeance was among the characteristics attributed to the deity.[1] In the following prayer, recorded during the Civil War, one is able to observe the Gullahs' poetic imagery, spirituality, sense of community, and their attitude toward the deity:

776 782

Aunt Jane's Prayer

782 539 776 Der Maussuh Jesus, we all uns beg Ooner (you) come make us a call dis yere day. We is nuttin' but poor Etiopian women and people ain't t'ink much 'bout we. We ain't trust ask any of dem great high people for come to we church, but do' you is de one great Maussuh, great too much dan Maussuh Linkum, you ain't shame to care for we African people.

Come to we, dear Maussuh Jesus. De sun, he hot too much, de road am dat long and boggy (sandy) and we ain't got no buggy, for send and fetch Ooner. But Maussuh, yo' 'member how yo' walked dat hard walk up Calvary and ain't

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3; Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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weary but t'ink about we all dat way. We know you ain't weary for to come to we. We pick out de torns, de prickles, de brier, de backslidin' and de quarrel and de sin out of yo' path so dey shan't hur Ooner pierce feet no mo'.

Come to we, dear Maussuh Jesus. We all luns ain't got no good cool water for give yo' when yo' t'irsty. You know, Maussuh, de drought so long, and de well so low, ain't nuttin' but mud to drink. But we gine to take de 'munion cup and fill it wid de tear ob repentence and love clean out ob we heart. Dat all we hab to gib yo', good Maussuh.

An' Maussuh Jesus, you say you gwine stand to de door and knock. But you ain't gwine stand at we door, Maussuh, and knock. We sets de door plum open for yo' and watch up de road for see you.

Sisters (turning to the other women in the church), what for you'all ain't open de door so Maussuh know He welcome? (One woman rose quietly from her knees and set the church door wide.)

Come Maussuh Jesus come! We know you is near, we heart is all just tremble, tremble, we so glad for hab yo' here. And Maussuh, we church ain't good 'nuff for yo' to sit down in, but stop by de door jes' one minute, dear Maussuh Jesus, and whisper one word to we heart—one good word—we do listen—Maussuh.[2]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. James Mackey

MORNING

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Here am I again once more, Heavenly Father,
The worm of the dust
Ready to bow this hour of the morning
On my bruised and bending knee.
Thank you, My Father, for your guardin' angel,
That guard me all night long
Until morning light appear.
And before he went from his watch,
He touch my eyes this morning with a finger of love,
And my eye become open
And behold a brand new Monday morning.
Oh, God, if you so please
Give us that holding out spirit,
That you may own us all
When we done trod across the many street of Charleston.
Oh God, what I say for our neighbors,
And the neighbors' children around in this vicinity,
Oh please, Our Father,
Make them more patient, more acknowledge,
May we love each and one another.
Help us to help each other.
And each other's cross to bear.
And Our Father, if you please,
Remember the President of this United States,
Oh, remember the officials.
And Our Father, once more I say
For the President of the N.A.A.C.P.,
Throw thy arms of protection around them,
May they achieve victory in whatever they may undertake to do.
Lead them, Our Father,
Through the unfriendly world where there's no friendly grace.
We know we must fight to increase our courage
That we may be able to endure the pain.
I ask you to please remember mankind far away,
Whatever his town may be.
Make him realize, that awful day will surely come.
And then have mercy, My Father,
When I done walk the last mile of the way,
Done all that you 'signed my hand to do,
When I shall come down off the stage of action,
Must surrender under the black banner of Death,
Ask you, Jesus, give me a resting place
Somewhere in your Kingdom
Which Job declare
The wicked cease from troubling.
Amen.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Johns Island

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9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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St. Simon's Island

Yarrabuh, Medina, and Binty (probably Bintu), the youngest, who was the only one of the family group who could not speak French. The others spoke English, French, and their native tongue. Why was it that Binty spoke only two languages? This fact raises still another interesting question.

Katie's grandmother was Margaret and Shad's was Hester. Both were apparently Mohammedans, since Katie and Shad remember fragments of their prayers and, in particular, the rice balls which the half-famished children were given when the sun went down on a certain fast day. They were vague about the time of year, but both gave me the identical recipe for making this ceremonial food. Katie said they got a peck of white rice from Darien and soaked it overnight. In the morning surplus water was drained off and the rice was put into the well-washed mortar. All the larger children were set to beating it. When it was fine, enough white sugar was added to make it taste like white loaf-sugar candy. Unlike a similar West African rice ball,[19] this type was not cooked. Shad said the pieces were made into dumplings, and that his grandmother used syrup if she could not get sugar. But Katie particularized and said the paste was rolled into balls "the size of small fowls' eggs" which were then put on a fanner and set aside to harden. When the children lined up to receive the rice balls, which were called "sarika," [20] the grandmother's eye was on the lookout for grimy hands. Any child whose hands were not perfectly clean had to leave and do a good job while the others waited. As she handed the sarika to a child she would say either "Sarika dee" or "Ah-me, Ah-me."

Portions of the prayer used by Bilali and his wife as they "got down flat," when it came time to pray, were remembered by both descendants. The two Mohammedans would hold a long string of beads. As Bilali moved a bead along he would say "Karo baro." Fatima would say: "Ah-me, Ah-me." When he moved the next bead he would say: "Saka baro" and again she would say: "Ah-me, Ah-me." Shad says he remembers hearing that Bilali ended his prayers with "Mohammedoo." According to Charles S. Wylly, in *Seed Sown in Georgia*, his grandfather, Thomas Spalding,

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She gives the names of the days in the Fanti language, and it is interesting to find that a boy born on Monday is called Kujot—probably Cudjo—and on Tuesday, Quabina, which was the name of a faithful slave at Retreat Plantation. Friday's child was called Kufi, and it is now easy to see where Kuffie Jones got his name.

[19] Described by M. J. Field, in Gold Coast Food (The College Press, Pamphlet No. 3).-

[20] Dr. Turner attributes the name sarika to the Bambara tribe, which inhabits the greater part of the French Sudan. This tribe is said by Geoffrey Gorer to be fanatically Mohammedan, and reared in a warlike tradition.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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St. Simon's Island

had slaves of "Moorish or Arabian descent, devout Mussulmans, who prayed to Allah . . . morning, noon, and evening." Wylly adds in a footnote that three times each day Bilali faced East and called upon Allah.[21] When he died his Koran and praying sheepskin were buried with him.

Other details concerning Bilali are given by Georgia Bryan Conrad in her "Reminiscences" which appeared in the *Southern Workman* in 1901. She tells us that "On Sapelo Island, near Darien, I used to know a family of Negroes who worshipped Mahomet. They were all tall and well-formed, with good features. They conversed with us in English, but in talking among themselves they used a foreign tongue that no one else understood. The head of the tribe was a very old man called Bi-la-li. He always wore a cap that resembled a Turkish fez. These Negroes held themselves aloof from the others as if they were conscious of their own superiority." [22]

Bilali's descendants on Sapelo have given me much interesting data on old notions which probably came out of Africa. To avoid collusion I never question two Negroes together, and always check the material given by one with that from others. Several Sapelo Negroes have told me that red was such a popular color with the Africans that many were captured by slave-ship captains hanging red cloth on the deck of a ship. When the Negroes unsuspectingly came aboard, they took a long

[21] Thomas Astley in Vol. II, of his Collection of Voyages and Travels, 1745, gives extracts from the writings of various African explorers. Their observations on the Mohammedans of the Senegal and Gambia region throw some light on the religious customs of the Mohammedans on Sapelo. One said: "the natives along the Gambia worship the one true and only God, whom they call Allah." Another remarked that "Mohammedanism found among these people is very lame. . . . It consists in . . . two or three ceremonies as the Ramadhin, or Lent, The Bayram, or Easter, and the practice of circumcision." Francis Moor made explorations in the same section in 1730 and Astley quotes him as saying: "they [the Fuli] are much like the Arabs, whose language is taught in their schools . . . they are generally more skilled in the Arabic than the Europeans in the Latin; for most of them speak it, though they have a vulgar tongue of their own, called Fuli. . . . Their humanity extends to all, but they are doubly kind to their own race . . . support the old, the blind and the lame. . . . They are rarely angry and the author could never hear them abuse one another. . . . They are always very clean. . . . They are strict Mohammedans and only a few drink brandy." Another explorer specified the time at which the Mohammedan Negroes said their prayers: "at Day-break, Noon, and at Sun-set." Sieur Brüe reported that "they keep standing a considerable time, looking . . . towards the Sun-rising; then they advance two paces, muttering something between their teeth: Then they lie flat on their faces: next rising on their knees . . . and afterwards they kiss the earth, several times."

[22] It is estimated that Mrs. Conrad saw the Sapelo Bilali shortly before 1860.

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voyage from which they never returned.[23] Ten years ago Katie told me that the Sapelo Negroes never swept dirt out the door at night if they could help it. If they did or were obliged to throw out water, it was important to say, "Move on, fr'en," or " 'Scuse me, brother." Otherwise they were in danger of offending some of their kinfolk who might be passing by or "visitin' aroun'." On St. Simon's I was told if it were necessary to sweep at night you must first throw out a live coal, to make sure you did not sweep away the spirit of some member of the family.

On Sapelo if a hag torments you at night you put a knife, or a Bible, under your pillow. Glasgow says that a man he knows would cry out in his sleep and could get no peace until he tried this remedy.[24] Katie told me that when you had occasion to speak of the dead, you made the sign of the cross on your forehead. At a funeral on St. Simon's an old woman went to the fireplace and, with a sooty finger, made the same sign on the forehead of a little child. The next day, when asked why she did this, she explained that it was to keep the spirit of the dead man from troubling the youngster.[25] Katie also told me that passing the child over the coffin to someone on the other side afforded the same immunity.

I have never been convinced that the reason given by our Negroes for holding funerals at night was unimpeachably true. The answer I usually get, when I question them, reflects on the generosity of the slave owner. It seems unlikely that any master as kindhearted as the one described by Susan Dabney Smedes, in *A Southern Planter*, would begrudge the time it took from the daily "tas' " for the funeral of a beloved slave. Night funerals were apparently an established custom in Virginia in 1835, the time the Dabneys left for Mississippi. Mrs. Smedes tells us that she remembers the death of Grannie Harriett, born in tide-water Virginia long before

[23] M. Andamson is quoted in Astley's Collection as saying that the "Bristol and Liverpool ships were the worst offenders." It is also reported by Miss Kingsley, in West African Travels, that red was a favorite color of the spirits ("spirits always like red") and the most frequent charm-case was of that color "to flatter and please" them.

[24] Miss Beckwith mentions the same inclination to ascribe supernatural powers to objects used in Christian religion: "hence a [Revivalist] preacher always held a Bible, although he might hold it upside down." On the coast of Georgia this custom is the rule, but it is from an unwillingness to admit illiteracy and to depart from a convention. But Miss Beckwith tells of other superstitions that are surprisingly similar to those found on our sea islands. They were in all likelihood carried to Jamaica by the slaves of the loyalists who settled there following the Revolutionary War.

[25] A curious instance of Catholic influence on an African superstition. Lampblack was used to darken coffins in the old days, and a finger rubbed on the coffin was as effective as one dabbed in soot.

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Another custom, more widespread than is generally known, probably originated in Africa. When a new building is completed it is christened with prayer and song, followed by shouting. The afternoon Joe and Clarence finished the Cabin, (Illustration 12), Clarence made a prayer and asked a blessing, Julia put rice in the four corners for good luck, and after a few songs it was considered that the building was auspiciously launched.

The addition to the original Cabin was *not* blessed. It is a curious fact that the roof developed leaks at once, termites got into the floor, and it was necessary to rebuild the whole section. If such bad luck continues, it will look as though the Sapelo idea is not far wrong. There, it is considered most unwise to put on an addition to an old house. "You will lose some member of your family if you do."

In the papering of the Cabin, on my own initiative, I took another precaution which has afforded the singers much amusement. The walls of many small cabins are covered with news-print, because the prevailing idea in the old days was that a hag had to read every word before she could work evil on you.[20] I used the financial section of *The New York Times* for good measure. In the accompanying illustration (Illustration 14), it can be seen how this original type of wallpaper enhances the picture made by the singers, and separates them from their background. It was made during the closing song—"One a These Days, My Sister"—when Willis was shaking the hand of Bessie in accordance with the usual custom at prayer meeting in a less sophisticated era.

DeZayas, in *African Negro Art*, tells of an exceedingly sensitive devil at Sierra Leone, who requires the utmost respect, and, if not propitiated by liberal offerings of palm wine, rice, and fowl, will certainly bring trouble to those invoking his intervention. Every time he is consulted, rice flour must first be offered. However, our Negroes disclaim any knowledge of their reason for using rice at a housewarming, except to bring good luck.

Chance often enables us to discover new examples of the general belief in occult forces. Such was the case when a friend and I heard a cracking report in my empty kitchen. On investigation we found that a glass bowl had broken in half. The next day Julia told me it is a sure sign that some member of your family is going

[20] A similar notion is held in Nassau according to M. Cavel in "Items of Folk-Lore from Bahama Negroes," in Vol. 17 of the Journal of American Folk-Lore. "If you think you are being hagged, take a pint of benne seed . . . and guinea corn . . . spill it all in the four corners of your house; that will catch the hag as she cannot leave the house before she has picked up all the seeds, one by one, during the night."

A, [For Illustration 12, see Category 342, plate facing p. 80--Analyst]
B, [For Illustration 14, see Category 353, plate facing p. 96--Analyst]

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27), A makes with head and shoulders bowed slightly forward, arms held close to her body, elbows bent at right angles, forearms thrust out before her, and palms upturned in a supplicating gesture. White musicians and dancers have obtained much from these untutored people, who appear to have an inborn gift for rhythm in its many manifestations. Work or play, preaching, praying, music, sculpture, or dancing—all are one to them when it comes to rhythmic expression.

HA'K 'E ANGELS

Deacon Eddy Thorpe, of McIntosh County, who contributed this Watch Night shout, explained that the slaves, when allowed to go to a praise-house that was out of bounds, were given passes with their promise to return before sun-up. On New Year's Eve the service consisted of prayers, religious songs, and a sermon by the preacher. At midnight, different members offered thanks to the Good Lord for the blessings of the past twelve months and implored His aid for the year to come. The shouting then began, and continued until dawn. This shout, which varies little in content or rhythm in Glynn, Liberty, McIntosh, and Camden counties,[3] was the last to be sung as the watcher, appointed for that duty, announced: "Day's a-comin' ":

Day, day Oh—see day's a-comin'
Ha'k 'e angels
Day, day Oh—see day's a-comin'
Ha'k 'e angels

[3] In the vicinity of Albany, Georgia, there is a similar version that uses "Yonder Come Day" instead of "Ha'k 'e Angels."

A. [For Illustration 27, see Category 142, plate facing p. 161--Analyst]

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MOONLIGHT—STARLIGHT

53 (764) In *Slave Songs of the United States*, the origin of a song similar to "Moonlight—Starlight" is attributed to St. Simon's Island by Colonel Trowbridge, who is quoted as saying "that it was sung at funerals in the night time—one of the most solemn and characteristic customs of the Negroes." Fanny Kemble, in her Journal, describes 764 a "buryin' " that took place at the Butler Plantation in 1839:

> Yesterday evening the burial of the poor man, Shadrach, took place. I had been applied to for a sufficient quantity of cotton cloth to make a winding-sheet for him, and just as the twilight was thickening into darkness I went with Mr. — [Pierce Butler, her husband] to the cottage of one of the slaves . . . a cooper of the name of London who was to perform the burial service. The coffin was laid on trestles in front of cooper's cottage, and a large assemblage of the people had gathered around, many of (53) men carrying pine-wood torches, the fitful glare of which glanced over the strange assembly. . . . Presently the whole congregation uplifted their voices in a hymn, the first high wailing notes of which—sung all in unison, in the midst of these unwonted surroundings—sent a thrill through all my nerves. When the chant ceased cooper London • (182) began a prayer, and all the people knelt down in the sand, as I did also. . . . When the prayer was concluded we all rose, and, the coffin being taken up, proceeded to the people's burial-ground, when London read aloud portions of the funeral service from the Prayer-book. . . . The service ended with a short address from London upon the subject of Lazarus, and the confirmation which the story of his resurrection afforded our hopes. . . . When the coffin was lowered the grave was found to be partially filled with water—naturally enough, for the whole island is a mere swamp, off which the Altamaha is only (192) kept from sweeping by the high dikes all around it. This seemed to shock and distress the people, and for the first time during the whole ceremony there were sounds of crying and exclamations of grief heard among them . . . and so we returned from one of the most striking religious ceremonies at which I ever assisted.

When Margaret, one of my star shouters, was buried a few years ago at Kelvin Grove, in the old slave yard on the marsh, I too was shocked to see the coffin lowered into the water, but in this instance such an occurrence was taken as a matter of course.

53 Of all the primitive songs this is the most plaintive as well as the most impressive:

Moonlight—Starlight
O-o-h [1] Moonlight
Believer what's the matter?
John lay the body down!
(Repeat)
John lay the body to the tomb
O-o-h—let me go!
John lay the body to the tomb
John lay the body down!
(Repeat)

[1] Sung with the lips closed. The accompanying piano arrangement is by Creighton Churchill.

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121 other denominations, I make no attempt to go into a description of usual church
[538] observances. My particular concern has been the preservation of the religious slave songs. Those of the Baptist Negroes—the most conservative sect on the Coast of Georgia—give greater evidence than the others of an African background. Coupled as they are with the most picturesque customs, they have come in for special consideration.

533 Although certain songs are peculiarly appropriate to such occasions as Easter and Communion, they cannot be rigidly classified according to the services which may have inspired them.[1] They were sung at any time, anywhere. The majority of
[128] them appear equally suited to church, prayer, and covenant meeting. However, the ceremonies connected with baptism, "settin'-up" with the dead, and burial mean so much to the Negro that a separate section of this Chapter is devoted to each of
[171] them. They appear to be connected with customs prevailing a century ago in the section of Africa from which the slaves were obtained. The significance attached to
795 baptism in a river, or immersion on the outgoing tide, may tie up with the initiation
171 rites connected with the river-worship of Dahomey; and anyone who reads what
761 explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have to say about the Africans' concern with death will recognize that our Negroes display the same trait.

CHURCH, PRAYER, AND COVENANT MEETING

794 Patty Gardner[2] used to open the "South End" prayer meeting, held at Deacon
796 Merchant's house, by singing the following song. As the other members joined in,
533 they shook hands ceremoniously with their neighbors assembled in a circle.[3] The younger generation knew nothing of this custom until I had Old Quarterman come to the Cabin and "show them the way."

[1] Some may have come into existence while the slaves were at work—others were undoubtedly conceived under stress of religious emotion. In the old days a deacon, at the peak of his
[152] rhythmically chanted prayer, broke into song, in which those present joined. After a verse or
[782] two, he continued the prayer, ending his plea for mercy by singing with the others some appropriate slave hymn. It is unfortunate that this highly effective method of rousing the congregation should have lapsed in most churches. Now, the impassioned exhortation ends with a sudden drop into an ordinary conversational tone—like a dash of cold water in the face.

[2] Patty, while singing a religious song at work, would go into a trance-like state. Clarence
[787] told me he remembered seeing her moving rhythmically in a circle around her cabin, a dish towel in one hand and a discarded tin can (highly prized in those days) in the other. She tried the can over and over, totally oblivious of time or surroundings.

[3] This procedure is mentioned by Sir Charles Lyell in his Second Visit to the United States.

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BAPTISM

795 533 On a frosty Sunday morning many years ago, I happened to be on the bank of the Frederica River south of the Fort. From a distance I heard the Negroes singing what sounded like a dirge, but as they came closer I found it was a baptismal song, sung by the procession which had formed, as is customary, at the church a mile away.[12] It was headed by the minister, followed by his assistants, the deacons and other members in pairs, while the "candidates" brought up the rear. The girls were dressed in white, but the boys wore ordinary overalls and work shirts. The solemn dignity of the occasion was impressive. Joe Lowman, one of the assisting preachers, with great earnestness addressed the congregation. He exhorted those of his hearers who had not been baptized to take no chances. In an intimate conversational tone he gave his views on the subject. He wanted it clearly understood that he was not prepared to say, "nobody was going to be saved who had only had his head sprinkled"—but he, for one, was not for disobeying instructions. The Lord ordered us to go down into the water, and that was all there was about it. It was like sending a boy to the store for potatoes; if he brought home turnips it would not be the same thing at all.

795 194 [193]

After the discourse and the usual prayers,[13] which were punctuated in the African manner with encouraging responses, rhythmically delivered, the officiating minister went down into the river to the spot selected by the deacon, who, with his staff to show the depth, had preceded him. While those on the river bank sang

[782]

[12] Before leaving the church the minister calls his congregation to order, and gives them some last-minute instructions. One cautioned his flock to conduct themselves on the way to the water in an orderly manner befitting the solemnity of the occasion. He said: "Now, I don't want any talkin' or laughin'.—Don' y'u begin to tell about your bean patch an' your peas. This ain' no time for it."

[794] [577]

[13] In a recent book the assertion is made that our Negroes "pray to the river" when they are baptized. This sounds like an African survival until it is learned that "to" means "beside" in this instance. It is no wonder that those who are unfamiliar with our Negroes and their use of words make curious mistakes.

[114] [196]

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doubtless speaking from a knowledge only of the plantation where she was then residing, for her co-workers have left descriptions of various praise houses on the Island. W. C. Gannett wrote in April, 1862, that the praise house on Pine Grove plantation was "quite a nice little house,—the best on this part of the island."[81] The praise house of Eustis plantation on Ladies Island which their mistress, then living in Massachusetts, had built them was a church indeed.[82]

Once, twice, or even three times a week, those who were religiously inclined met at the praise house to sing, pray, and exhort. Edward L. Pierce estimated that about half of the adult Negroes on St. Helena were members of a church.[83] The praise meeting usually opened with a "sperichil" followed by a hymn which the leader "deaconed out" two lines at a time, reading from a well-worn psalm book, if perchance he had learned to read, pretending to read, nevertheless, holding the book nearer the flickering light as if to make out the words, all the while calling out the lines from memory. Cuffy, the leader of the praise house on Pine Grove plantation, always made his own hymns, improvised from hymns of the whites, "praying to de Lord Jedus teach um as he in de woods [to] jine one word 'ginst t'oder."[84] After another hymn and perhaps a spiritual, the leader would ask for a prayer, then

[81] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 20 n.

[82] See also Wm. Henry Trescot, "Address on Gen. Stephen Elliott, delivered in the House of Representatives of South Carolina, Sept. 8, 1866," p. 5. For many years preceding the War, Rev. Stephen Elliott, father of General Elliott, of Beaufort, "had declined the rectorship of a regular congregation, and, having built a church upon his own plantation, preached regularly and most efficiently to the slaves of the neighborhood."

[83] Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Record*, sup., I., 305.

[84] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

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567 796 796 535 [782]

read a long passage from the Bible and after another prayer call upon a member to speak.

Edward L. Pierce attended several praise meetings on St. Helena in 1862 and reported that "their exhortations to personal piety were fervent, and though their language was many times confused, at least to my ear, occasionally an important instruction or a felicitous expression could be recognized. In one case, a preacher of their own, commenting on the text, 'Blessed are the meek,' exhorted his brethren not to be 'stout-minded.' "[55]

567 796 535

After another prayer and song the "shout" began.[56] Although the prayer meeting invariably preceded the shout, the members considered the shout a part of their worship, explaining that "it exercise de frame."[57] Pushing the benches back to the wall and perhaps putting another piece of lightwood on the fire in the hearth and on the one which burned red before the door, the worshipers began the recreation which for the church members took the place of the informal dance.

"Old and young, men and women, sprucely-dressed young men, grotesquely half-clad field hands—the women generally with gay handkerchiefs twisted about their heads and with short skirts—boys with tattered shirts and men's trousers, young girls barefooted," wrote Miss Harriet Ware who attended many a shout on St. Helena in the

[55] Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

[56] Mr. William Elliott, of Columbia, S. C., a relative of the William Elliott frequently quoted in these pages, states that "the 'shout' is the object of the meeting to which the rest is the introduction." Mr. Elliott speaks from an intimate knowledge of sea-island customs. The shouts, however, which the writer attended on St. Helena Island in 1928 were invariably commenced after the praise meeting had been dismissed.

[57] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

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curtseys, and the men touched their hats in a soldier's salute, or swept them quickly from their heads.

The Reverend Richard Fuller created a sensation when he arrived. Stares brightened and eyes grew moist. Amid shouts of "Bress de Lo'd, Bres de Lo'd!" "Hebenly Massa!" "Gra-a-ate King!" he mounted to the platform. When all were seated a quaint old man, clad in cotton checks, bowed from many years of cotton hoeing, stepped out on the platform and, leaning on his cane, gently swaying his body as if to keep time, struck up in a shrill, cracked voice the tune:

"Ma-a-assa Fullah a sittin' on de tree ob life
For to yeddy when Jordan roll,
Roll, Jordan; roll, Jordan,
Roll, Jordan, roll."

And then a plain, middle-aged black preacher came forward and commenced a prayer, which he pursued at great length with frequent interruptions from the congregation of "Amen," "Glory," and "Lo'd, do!" They had already been to their praise-house meetings twice during the week and some of them earlier that morning, but they were none the less eager for this Sunday-noon meeting when fellow freedmen from all over the Island gathered for worship and recreation.[2]

A few former planters, like the Reverend Richard Fuller, had returned to Beaufort to try to take up life again in the little town now overrun with freedmen, Fed-

[2] The foregoing description is based on Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*; "The South As It Is," *Nation*, Dec. 1865, pp. 746-747; J. W. Alvord, *Letters from the South*, pp. 8-10; Charles Nordoff, *The Freedmen of South Carolina*; S. G. W. Benjamin, "The Sea Islands," *Harper's Monthly*, LVII, 839-861.